



Billing Code 4310–55

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS–R8–ES–2015–N126; FXES11130000–156–FF08E00000]

**Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Draft Recovery Plan for Vine Hill
Clarkia**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of document availability; request for comments.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, announce the availability of the Draft Recovery Plan for Vine Hill Clarkia (*Clarkia imbricata*) for public review and comment. The draft recovery plan includes recovery objectives and criteria, and specific actions necessary to achieve downlisting and delisting from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

DATES: We must receive any comments on the draft recovery plan on or before

[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: You may obtain a copy of the recovery plan from our website at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/recovery-plans.html>. Alternatively, you may contact the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-2605, Sacramento, CA 95825 (telephone 916-414-6700).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jennifer Norris, Field Supervisor, at the above street address or telephone number (see **ADDRESSES**).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Recovery of endangered or threatened animals and plants to the point where they are again secure, self-sustaining members of their ecosystems is a primary goal of our endangered species program and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act; 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*). Recovery means improvement of the status of listed species to the point at which listing is no longer appropriate under the criteria specified in section

4(a)(1) of the Act. The Act requires the development of recovery plans for listed species, unless such a plan would not promote the conservation of a particular species.

We listed Vine Hill clarkia throughout its entire range as endangered on October 22, 1997 (62 FR 55791). It is a narrow endemic, historically known from three locations in central Sonoma County, California, all three of which may be extirpated. Currently, the species is only known to exist as a single introduced population on the 0.6-hectare (1.5-acre) Vine Hill Preserve, owned and managed by the California Native Plant Society. Between 2007 and 2012, the population fluctuated from approximately 500 to 8,781 plants.

All known populations of Vine Hill clarkia are located between 60 to 75 meters (197 to 246 feet) elevation, on what has been mapped as Goldridge acidic sandy loams, in an area sometimes referred to as the Sonoma Barrens. The ability of Vine Hill clarkia to persist naturally outside of Sonoma Barrens conditions is unknown. The Sonoma Barrens are an area within Sonoma County located halfway between maritime and inland climates, in a pronounced fog gap that makes it subject to peculiar climatic fluctuations (Roof 1972).

At this time, the primary threats to Vine Hill clarkia are competition for light and space with native and non-native species and risk of extinction from stochastic environmental events associated with small populations. Because of the extreme range

restriction of this already-narrow endemic, and its small population size, the plant is highly vulnerable to extinction from random events, including wildfire, herbivory, disease and pest outbreaks, and human disturbance.

Two species of concern are also addressed in this draft recovery plan, Vine Hill manzanita (*Arctostaphylos densiflora*) and Vine Hill ceanothus (*Ceanothus foliosus* var. *vineatus*), which historically coexisted with Vine Hill clarkia. Vine Hill manzanita and Vine Hill ceanothus are included in this draft recovery plan because a community-based recovery strategy provides for conservation of species with similar habitat requirements to those of Vine Hill clarkia, and because recovery actions implemented for Vine Hill clarkia that do not consider these other rare species may negatively affect the community. These two species are, respectively, State listed as endangered and listed Rank 1B by the California Native Plant Society.

Recovery Plan Goals

The purpose of a recovery plan is to provide a framework for the recovery of species so that protection under the Act is no longer necessary. A recovery plan includes scientific information about the species and provides criteria that enable us to gauge whether downlisting or delisting the species is warranted. Furthermore, recovery plans help guide our recovery efforts by describing actions we consider necessary for each

species' conservation and by estimating time and costs for implementing needed recovery measures.

The goal of this recovery plan is to improve the status of Vine Hill clarkia so that it can be delisted. The interim goal is to recover the species to the point that it can be downlisted from endangered to threatened status. The recovery objectives of the plan are:

- Restore Sonoma Barrens habitat and establish Vine Hill clarkia.
- Manage native and nonnative vegetation that competes with Vine Hill clarkia.
- Ensure locations with Vine Hill clarkia are secure from incompatible uses.

The draft recovery plan contains recovery criteria based on protecting, maintaining, and increasing populations, as well as increasing habitat quality and quantity. As Vine Hill clarkia meets recovery criteria, we will review its status and consider it for downlisting or removal from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

Community conservation efforts recommended for Vine Hill manzanita and Vine Hill ceanothus include establishing these species, either in concert with each other and Vine Hill clarkia, or separately.

Request for Public Comments

We request written comments on the draft recovery plan described in this notice. All comments received by the date specified above will be considered in development of a final recovery plan for Vine Hill clarkia. You may submit written comments and information by mail or in person to the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office at the above address (see **ADDRESSES**).

Public Availability of Comments

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Authority

We developed this recovery plan under the authority of section 4(f) of the Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533(f). We publish this notice under section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

Dated: July 23, 2015.

**Ren Lohofener,
Regional Director,
Pacific Southwest Region**

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